

In this Assembly deliverance the action of the Assemblies of 1904 and 1906 was re-affirmed declaring that the systems of doctrine of the Northern and Cumberland Confessions were "substantially the same." The assertion that there was substantial identity in the confessional systems of the two Churches is an assertion which is contradicted by known facts. This assertion is true only upon the theory that by virtue of the revision of 1903 the Northern Church receded from its historic doctrinal position. This was what the Cumberland union leaders claimed. In the supplemental report to the Cumberland Assembly sitting in Dallas, Texas, in 1904, the position was taken that the Northern Church had revised out of its Confession the doctrines of unconditional election, definite atonement and efficacious grace. We have no less authority than "The Cumberland Presbyterian," the official organ of that Church, that this report "set forth the grounds" upon which the Cumberland committee acted in signing the joint report, and that, "after equally thorough consideration," the Cumberland "Assembly approved the position and recommendation of its committee." The speeches delivered by the members of the Cumberland union committee in that Assembly show that they were all in thorough accord with the doctrinal position taken in the supplemental report. Technically speaking, the supplemental report was not formally adopted by the Assembly, but it was ordered to be spread upon the minutes. And when, in the deliverance in question, the Denver Assembly declares that the 1903 revision accomplished "the removal of ground for asserting that the Confession of Faith was in any sense fatalistic," it did so, according to the union leaders in the Cumberland Church, by receding from its historic position upon the distinctive doctrines mentioned in the supplemental report.

But, as asserted above, this declaration of the substantial identity of the systems of doctrine of the two Confessions is made in the face of known facts. It is a historic fact, a fact not open to question, that the systems of doctrine of these two Confessions have always been regarded as diametrically opposite as the poles. Dr. Roberts' statement, quoted above, of the doctrinal content of the Presbyterian system, is one which he, as well as all others, knows can not be laid side by side with the revised Cumberland Confession of 1883. He knows that the former represents distinctive Calvinism, and that the latter is Arminian in tone and meaning. But let Dr. Roberts himself speak upon the point, for he certainly ought to be regarded as a good witness. In a paper which he read before the Presbyterian Ministers' Association of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1889, on the subject of the "Revision of the Confession of Faith," in speaking to the particular point of the revision of the third chapter, he said:

"Enter into lengthy argument at this point I can not, for the limits of space forbid. It is sufficient that a source of danger be pointed out by recalling the history of a movement for the revision of Chapter III, which began in a neighboring Synod at the commencement of this century. Of present decided interest and value is it to remember that the Cumberland Presbyterians, when they amended the Westminster Confes-

sion in 1829, modified Sections 1 and 2 of Chapter III and eliminated the remaining six. It is likewise a curious repetition of history to find that they substituted in Chapter X, Section 3, instead of the word 'elect' the word 'all' before 'infants.' Presbyterians in government the Cumberlands are, but Calvinists in doctrine they are not. The beginning of their departure toward semi-Arminianism was a demand for the modification of Chapter III, especially as regards the doctrine of preterition, and it is now seriously proposed by some persons in our midst favoring confessional revision, to amend the same chapter, to some extent, in the very way in which it was amended by a now distinctly Arminian body. Cumberland revision led inevitably to Arminianism. And, in the light of past history, objectors to Chapter III and to its essential doctrine of reprobation have the burden of proof thrown upon them to show that its revision by us, through the elimination of certain of its sections, will not result in an attempt to make our Church a Church which shall be 'Presbyterian without being Calvinistic.' An old proverb is applicable here: 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating.'"

Since the foregoing utterance of Dr. Roberts' opinion of the Cumberland Church's doctrinal position, the Confession of that Church has not been altered in the slightest particular. And what is even more: The men of that Church who by reason of their position, official and otherwise, were competent to state the doctrinal position of their Church during the union negotiations, declared with all the emphasis which language could command, that it had not changed in the least degree. And yet Dr. Roberts, in the face of the above elaborate and evidently thoroughly studied utterance, in 1889, declares, along with his associates on the Union Committee, that the systems of doctrine of the two Confessions are in such agreement as to warrant the union of the Churches!

Why did the Denver Assembly issue this deliverance? Was it with a view to influencing future decisions of the civil courts? It seems to bear such a construction. The opening paragraph says: "The General Assembly, in view of legal complications involving Church property in Tennessee, adopted the following declaration." The Tennessee court declared that the Cumberland Church had gone into union with a Church of an opposite faith. Now comes the Denver Assembly which says in substance: "You are mistaken; the Cumberlands have united with a Church holding a creed which has historically distinguished the Cumberland Church. Hence, there has been no change of faith upon the part of the Cumberlands in entering into this union." Does not the deliverance in question authorize this interpretation? I sincerely hope this construction is not authorized by this deliverance, but it seems to be warranted by the actual situation in Tennessee (since then in Missouri), which confronts the "reunited Church." "The proof of the pudding is in the eating" undoubtedly. The pudding seems to have had a Calvinistic flavoring in 1904; but in 1909, by reason of a very critical situation "involving church property in Tennessee," a flavoring of an opposite character seems to have been imparted to the pudding.